

This is England is a festival of British-made short films taking place annually in Rouen. This year's festival from 16 - 24 November, was launched eight years ago by some members of the Rouen-Norwich Club, the counterpart association of the NNRFA, and it has gone from strength to strength every year. The festival organisers receive about 1000 entries and whittle them down to a shortlist of 30 films in three categories: documentary, fiction, and animation, and a jury of three drawn from the film industry, alternating from France and Britain each year, judge them. This year the judges were film director Guy Myhill from Norwich, documentary-maker Andrew Baxter from Edinburgh and Joanna Coates, a lecturer in cinema at Norwich University of the Arts. This year the films were shown in the new Kinopolis in the modern Centre St Sever on the left bank of Rouen. Christophe Thierry, President of the Rouen-Norwich Club and Festival Director, and his indefatigable team which includes Nathalie Le Gendre and Chantal Féron, do all the organisation including sub-titling, arranging accommodation, programming and publicity. In addition, some 10,000 school students from the region's *Lycées* and *Collèges* see the films in the morning and each group also makes an award. All in all, considering the organisers are all full-time teachers the festival is an extraordinary achievement.

Sometimes the film-makers are present and interviewed about their films. Awards are also made by the audience and the Rouen-Norwich Club. A list of the winning films is shown here: <http://www.thisisengland-festival.com/?p=prix-decernes2019>. You may find some of them on Vimeo.

This year, the 60th anniversary of the twinning between Norwich and Rouen, a delegation of representatives from Norwich arts organisations were invited with a view to exploring links with similar organisations in Rouen. Lots of ideas came out of these encounters and further initiatives came from people with interests in children's literature, photography, and a choir. Carrie Mansfield, of The Garage, has written up her experiences of the trip, the many meetings she had there and likely outcomes. Do read this optimistic and enthusiastic report at: <http://www.thegarage.org.uk/blog/rouen-trip-shows-even-climate-theres-drive-work-and-learn-people-other-cultures> She concludes:

'I for one will use the relationships developed to create opportunities for meaningful projects with our friends from across the channel. To demonstrate that, even in this climate, there is a willingness and a drive to work with people from other cultures. To learn from each other, to understand each other and share this world we live in.'

Films were not the only attraction of the week. Following his exhibition at the Museum of Norwich's exhibition Norwich in '59, Norwich-born photographer Stefan Ebelewicz had an exhibition at the Mairie (Rouen city hall) which showed photos from Rouen and Norwich. The festival week was concluded by a concert with the Islas from the Norwich indie rock scene.

Marion Catlin of CultureShift was also in the party from Norwich and says that 'They [the City of Rouen] want to reinforce connections between Rouen, Normandy, Norwich and Norfolk. Following a meeting earlier this year in Norwich with representatives of Norwich arts organisations, this was a return trip. Marion will be pleased to hear from anyone with ideas for cross-cultural connections, but you can also contact the NNRFA who has been creating links and exchanges for over 60 years!

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